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Eleventh report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 14 of resolution 1284 (1999)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 14 of Security Council resolution 1284 (1999), in which the Council requested me to report every four months on the compliance by Iraq with its obligations regarding the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. The present report provides a brief account of the relevant developments since my last report (S/2002/1349).

II. Background

2. On 11 December 2002, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, sent a message to the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Abdel Rahmen Al-Atiah, in which it was noted that there had been no cooperation by Iraq on the subject of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains.

3. On 15 December, the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers, under the chairmanship of the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, urged the international community to ensure full Iraqi implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including the release of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war. He also stressed that an apology by Iraq must include a disclosure of the fate of the missing Kuwaiti nationals.

4. On 18 December, the High-level Coordinator briefed the Security Council on my tenth report pursuant to paragraph 14 of resolution 1284 (1999) (S/2002/1349). In his briefing, Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov noted that while no tangible progress had been made, there were some promising signs. He emphasized that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, Naji Sabri, had invited him to visit Baghdad to discuss issues relevant to the mandate under resolution 1284 (1999). This, he said, constituted positive steps on the question of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains.

5. The members of the Security Council welcomed the signs demonstrated by Iraq. They emphasized, however, that little substantive progress had been made on the issue of repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. The United States of America was particularly concerned about the lack of progress in the case of Captain Michael Speicher and requested the Coordinator to continue to pursue the case in contacts with the Iraqi authorities. Many members of

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the Council expressed hope that the forthcoming visit of Ambassador Vorontsov to Baghdad would lead to substantive results.

6. In a subsequent statement to the press, the President of the Security Council said that the Council expressed deep concern over the continuing plight of the Kuwaiti and third-country nationals still remaining in Iraq. The statement also expressed a strong desire for concrete and substantive progress on the matter and conveyed the hope that the question would continue to be dealt with as a strictly humanitarian one. The importance of the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Tripartite Commission was also stressed, and members took note of the recent Iraqi agreement to resume participation in the Technical Subcommittee.

7. On 25 December, the Deputy Chairman of the Kuwaiti National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs, Ibrahim Majed Al-Shaheen, welcomed the decision of the Government of Iraq to participate in the meetings of the Technical Subcommittee at Amman. Speaking to the press after a meeting with the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States (LAS), Amre Moussa, Mr. Al-Shaheen emphasized that the humanitarian issue of missing persons should remain separate from politics.

8. Speaking at a press conference on 30 December, Mr. Moussa stated that progress on the file of Kuwaiti prisoners of war might be achieved in 2003. He referred, in particular, to the Coordinator's forthcoming visit to Iraq.

9. In an interview on 28 January 2003, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq expressed his belief that an understanding could be reached between Iraq and Kuwait on the issue of the missing persons once attempts to politicize the issue stop. He reiterated the desire of the Government of Iraq to see the return of what he claimed were thousands of Iraqi missing, and expressed the view that the recent meetings of the Technical Subcommittee had shown encouraging signs.

10. On 4 February, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Egypt and delegate to the League of Arab States, Ahmed Khaled Al-Kulaib, officially informed the League that Iraq had retracted its pledge, made during the Beirut summit of LAS, to cooperate on the issue of the Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons. Ambassador Al-Kulaib expressed regret that Iraq had not provided any information or cooperation during the first two rounds of the Technical Subcommittee's meetings.

11. During the open debate of the Security Council on Iraq, on 18 and 19 February, numerous representatives (Argentina, Bahrain, Gambia, India, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, League of Arab States) spoke, inter alia, on the issue of repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains (see S/PV.4709 and Resumption 1). The representative of Kuwait stated that no progress had been made with respect to the Kuwaiti and other prisoners and missing persons. He also said that the visit of the Coordinator to Iraq had not produced tangible progress either. Other speakers urged Iraq to cooperate on the issue in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The representative of Yemen noted that "this is a humanitarian question that continues to act as a stumbling block on the road to a rapprochement between the two countries. The representative of India welcomed the positive steps taken by Iraq, noting in particular the beginning of discussions under the auspices of ICRC and within the context of the Tripartite Commission.

12. The heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries met in Kuala Lumpur on 24 and 25 February. In their final document, the members of the Movement said they were encouraged by the resumption of the Tripartite Technical Subcommittee and expressed their strong desire for concrete and substantive progress on this matter (A/57/759-S/2003/332, annex I, para. 189).

13. In the resolution adopted at the fifteenth Arab Summit, held at Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt, on 1 March, the League of Arab States urged the continuation of the meetings of the Technical Subcommittee, and commended Kuwait's response to the information provided by Iraq. The League also expressed its wish to see tangible progress (see S/2003/254).

14. The question of the Kuwaiti missing persons was addressed on 3 March during the thirteenth joint ministerial meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union in Doha, at which a final statement was issued expressing concern at the continuing uncertainty over Kuwaiti and other countries' missing persons and prisoners of war. Iraq was called upon to meet its clear obligation under the relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolution 1284 (1999), to resume cooperation with the Tripartite Commission and ICRC.

III. Recent activities

15. On 11 December 2002, the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Mohammed A. Aldouri, informed the Coordinator in a letter that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq would welcome his visit to Baghdad.

16. On 18 December, I met with the Coordinator to exchange views on how to proceed with the implementation of his mandate in the light of the invitation to visit Iraq. On the same day, I met with the Permanent Representative of Iraq and called upon him to cooperate fully with the Coordinator during the latter's visit of Baghdad.

17. On the same day, an Iraqi delegation participated on the sidelines of the Tripartite Commission's meeting at Geneva. This was the first time Iraq had participated in such a meeting since it decided to boycott the Commission in 1998. Members of the Tripartite Commission agreed to extend the mandate of the Technical Subcommittee until the next meeting of the Commission. They also endorsed the proposal to suspend the quorum rule of the Technical Subcommittee for a period of four months. This would allow meetings between Iraq and any other members (in the presence of a third member of the Commission, mutually agreed between Iraq and the other party) with the purpose of addressing cases previously discussed in the Commission. The Republic of Iraq, the State of Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia agreed to meet with the ICRC delegation in Amman on 8 January. This agreement did not preclude other members from meeting with Iraq under similar provisions.

18. In an interview with the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Deputy-Chairman of the Kuwaiti National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs described the agreement as a very important step. As reported by Agence France-Presse (AFP), the Under-secretary of the Foreign Ministry of Kuwait, Khaled Al-Jarallah, expressed hope that Iraq would cooperate positively with the new mechanism.

19. The spokesman for the Iraqi Foreign Ministry stated that the agreement to resume talks was spelled out in the minutes of the meeting held under the auspices of ICRC. The ICRC spokeswoman, Nada Doumani, stated that ICRC expected that the process would achieve concrete results and thus ease the anguish of families who had waited too long to find out what had happened to their relatives.

20. On 19 December, the Coordinator held separate meetings with the Chargé d'affaires of Kuwait and Iraq to discuss his forthcoming visit to the region, during which he was also planning to be present on the sidelines of the first meeting of the Technical Subcommittee in Amman.

21. On 20 December, a letter was sent to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, in which the Coordinator accepted an invitation to visit Baghdad to discuss, inter alia, the question of repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. Ambassador Vorontsov noted that while "the question of missing Iraqi nationals is not part of my mandate under Security Council resolution 1284 (1999), I would be prepared, as I have been in the past, to listen to your concerns regarding this matter as well".

22. On 24 December, the Coordinator met with the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait to discuss the forthcoming talks on the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. During that meeting and again on 29 January 2003, the Permanent Representative of Kuwait, Mohammad A. Abulhasan, reiterated, on the question of the Iraqi missing persons, that it was not in the mandate of paragraph 14 of resolution 1284 (1999).

23. On 30 December, the Coordinator met with the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States, James Cunningham, and other United States officials. Ambassador Cunningham expressed the hope that Ambassador Vorontsov would raise the matter of Captain Speicher during his forthcoming visit to Baghdad, and would emphasize its importance as a humanitarian and legal issue. The Coordinator was informed that the United States authorities had dispatched a number of questions related to the investigation into the Captain Speicher case to the Iraqi Foreign Ministry.

24. On 8 January 2003, the Technical Subcommittee met at Amman. Kuwaiti, Saudi and Iraqi officials discussed the fate of the missing persons, while the Coordinator participated on the sidelines. The parties agreed to address the 12 Kuwaiti, 5 Iraqi and 3 Saudi cases during their next meeting.

25. The ICRC spokesman, Moin Qassis, stated to AFP that the five-hour talks were constructive and noted that the meeting was the start of a dialogue, and all three parties listened to each other in a constructive and good manner. The main purpose of the meeting was to settle humanitarian issues left unresolved after the Gulf war, in particular to ascertain the fate of those missing. ICRC welcomed the resumption of the dialogue and hoped that it would produce tangible results.

26. The Coordinator informed the press that the first meeting of the Technical Subcommittee had been constructive and useful, although it was an organizational meeting. He considered that making progress during the second meeting would be the best demonstration that the meetings could yield positive results.

27. In pursuance of his mandate, the Coordinator continued contacts with the leadership of LAS and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). On

12 January, the Coordinator met in Cairo with the Secretary-General of LAS, Amre Moussa, and briefed him on issues relevant to repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. Mr. Moussa expressed satisfaction that the parties had entered into dialogue on this very important humanitarian problem and hoped that positive results would be forthcoming. The LAS spokesman, Hisham Yusef, told the press that Ambassador Vorontsov had stressed that progress was necessary on the humanitarian issue of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains.

28. On 12 January, the Coordinator held a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Ahmed Maher. It was felt that the possibility of a military action in the region could disrupt ongoing efforts regarding the question of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. The Foreign Minister promised to continue to press Iraq for an early resolution of the issue, and to call on the Iraqi delegation to be serious and constructive in the forthcoming meetings of the Technical Subcommittee.

29. On 14 January, the Coordinator met in Jeddah with the Secretary-General of OIC, Abdelouahed Belkeziz, who expressed his full support for the resumed activities of the Technical Subcommittee and the Coordinator and reiterated his appeal to the parties concerned to cooperate in a serious and constructive manner.

30. On 18 January, the Coordinator travelled to Baghdad where he met with the Director of the Organizations and Conferences Office, Saeed Al-Musawi; the Director of the Legal Office, Abdul Monim Al-Kadi; the Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, Mohammed Aldouri; and the head of the Iraqi delegation to the Technical Subcommittee, Ibrahim Al-Aqidi. The Coordinator expressed satisfaction with the resumption of Iraqi participation in the Tripartite Commission, which marked a good beginning. Mr. Al-Musawi stated that the parties had started a dialogue to bring an acceptable package to this humanitarian crisis. He further expressed hope that future cooperation would be based on principles of international law and consistent with United Nations resolutions.

31. The Coordinator stressed the importance of cooperation on the return of the mortal remains, which would be seen as progress by Kuwait. Mr. Al-Kadi stated that Iraq had released all Kuwaiti prisoners in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and that Iraq did not have any others. He further alleged that Kuwait had failed to provide full and complete information regarding 250 files, making investigation into those claims difficult.

32. Nevertheless, Mr. Al-Musawi expressed the hope that the process would continue, but added that information on many of the cases was difficult to find. Mr. Al-Aqidi stated that there were no remaining documents regarding the missing Kuwaitis, and investigation must now be based almost entirely on eyewitness accounts, which would be difficult to obtain because of the significant passage of time and the unavailability of witnesses. He pointed out that, at the first Technical Subcommittee meeting between the two sides, it had been agreed that they would hold hearings by bringing witnesses who could provide testimony regarding the fate of the missing.

33. Regarding the missing Iraqis, Mr. Al-Aqidi said that they were both civilians and military personnel, but mostly the latter; the civilians were mostly those Iraqis who were residents of Kuwait at the time of war.

34. On the fate of Captain Speicher, the Coordinator recalled that the United States had sent to Iraq a list of questions, many of which were valid. Mr. Al-Aqidi said Iraq would try to answer the questions and submit them to ICRC.

35. Also on 18 January, when the Coordinator met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iraq, the question of the missing persons was discussed in detail. The Foreign Minister said that Iraq would consider the questions posed by the United States, and that it would also consider the possibility of establishing a technical subcommittee to discuss Captain Speicher's file. The Coordinator was of the opinion that the first Technical Subcommittee meeting was a good beginning, and stressed the importance of maintaining the momentum for the forthcoming second meeting, which should be more substantive and address specific files. He emphasized that the spirit of cooperation should be demonstrated by the exchange of information. The Foreign Minister agreed that it was important to create a working environment conducive to cooperation, without which there would not be a solution to this issue.

36. The Foreign Minister promised that his country would make intensive efforts to look for the missing Kuwaitis, but explained that witnesses must be located to find out what had happened during the uprising in Basra. He also recalled that Iraq had 1,137 of its own missing, and claimed that many had been killed and buried in Kuwait, beyond the reported mass graves in the demilitarized zone. The Coordinator enquired about the response to the Iraqi request to visit the reported mass graves in the demilitarized zone, as UNIKOM was prepared to provide assistance and the Kuwaitis assured Iraq that it was more than welcome to visit the site. Mr. Al-Musawi explained that the presence of landmines made such a visit difficult.

37. After the talks, the Coordinator noted that a series of meetings had been scheduled between Iraq and Kuwait, and appealed to Iraq to intensify its efforts in searching for missing persons. He also emphasized that the parties should parlay the good start into achieving concrete results, especially with regard to the return of the mortal remains. He was prepared to address the matter of the Iraqi missing persons, but recalled that the question was not part of his official mandate.

38. On 19 January 2003, the Coordinator held a meeting with the families of the Iraqi missing, chaired by Manther Al-Mutlak, Chairman of the Committee on Iraqi Missing Persons in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, who declared that the Coordinator's presence in the meeting was a historic event, as the question of Iraq's missing had for far too long been forgotten. He also said that he was prepared to meet with his Kuwaiti counterparts, either in Kuwait or Iraq. Mr. Al-Musawi expressed his sympathies to the families of the missing Kuwaitis, who were likewise bereaved. He also proposed establishing contacts between the two countries at the non-governmental organization level. In an interview with the media after the meeting, the Coordinator expressed his sympathies to the families of all those missing, and stressed that this was a humanitarian problem.

39. On 20 January, after his meetings in Baghdad, the Coordinator travelled by car from Baghdad to Kuwait, via the UNIKOM base in the demilitarized zone, for another round of meetings. He met with the Deputy Chairman of the Kuwaiti National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs, Mr. Al-Shaheen, and, separately, with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, whom he briefed on his discussions with the Iraqi officials. The Coordinator conveyed to Mr. Al-Shaheen the proposal

of Mr. Al-Mutlak for their respective committees to hold joint meetings to discuss the question of Kuwaiti and Iraqi missing persons.

40. On 21 January, the Coordinator met the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, who said that he had no objection to allowing Iraqis to come to Kuwait to ascertain the fate of their missing.

41. After that meeting, the Coordinator expressed his hope that the forthcoming Technical Subcommittee meeting would yield positive results. He also stated that the Iraqis had said that it was very difficult to get information on the whereabouts of the missing persons since witnesses had disappeared.

42. On 21 January, the Coordinator met with the Speaker of Parliament, Jasen Al-Khorafi to brief him on his recent visit to Baghdad. The Speaker expressed hope that the initial contacts between Iraq and Kuwait would produce tangible results.

43. On 22 January, the Coordinator met in Amman with Mr. Al-Shaheen and Rabea Al-Adsani of the Kuwaiti National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs. Mr. Al-Shaheen gave the Coordinator a briefing on the second meeting of the Technical Subcommittee, informing him of Iraq's inadequate investigation into the 12 Kuwaiti files. He explained that the initial list of 12 files was selected by Iraq during the first meeting of the Subcommittee. Kuwait amended it by replacing six of the names on the list. Iraq later admitted to overlooking the subsequent changes to the list. Mr. Al-Shaheen said that, in contrast, Kuwait had provided conclusive evidence on the fate of two Iraqi missing, and full information on the third case. Mr. Al-Shaheen also informed the Coordinator that agreement was reached on the dates of future meetings of the Technical Subcommittee, namely, 16 and 17 February; 2 and 3 March; 16 and 17 March; and 13 and 14 April. All meetings, at the request of the Iraqi delegation, would be held at Amman, except for the meeting on 13 and 14 April, which would be held at Geneva to coincide with the next meeting of the Tripartite Commission.

44. On the same day, the Coordinator met with Mr. Al-Aqidi, the head of the Iraqi delegation, who informed the Coordinator that there was progress on all 12 Kuwaiti files, and that an official report would be submitted on 29 January. He said that the file on the pilot from Saudi Arabia was discussed, which, in his opinion, should be closed on the basis of documents presented by Iraq. Mr. Al-Aqidi also conveyed the decision of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to answer the questions contained in the United States letter regarding Captain Speicher.

45. On 23 January, the Coordinator met in London with the Chairman of the Kuwaiti National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs, Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, and briefed him on his meetings with Iraqi officials in Baghdad. The Coordinator noted that the Foreign Minister of Iraq had invited him to visit Baghdad again, and expressed his willingness to undertake such a trip provided that it would be productive.

46. On 22 and 23 January, Iraqi and Kuwaiti delegates held the next meeting of the Technical Subcommittee in Amman. The Coordinator was present on the sidelines. At his meeting with the delegations, he stated that words should be turned into deeds. He also expected a long road before satisfactory conclusions could be reached. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia presented five cases while Iraq had six cases of missing persons. The Kuwaiti National Committee for Missing Persons and Prisoners of War Affairs informed the Coordinator of the agreed schedule of

meetings and confirmed its readiness to hold talks with him on the sidelines of those meetings. The Iraqi delegation made a similar commitment.

47. As reported by AFP, the head of the Kuwaiti delegation, Ibrahim Majed Al-Shaheen, stated that the discussions were serious. At the end of the meeting he noted that it was the first time that the delegations had discussed details. He said, however, that Iraq had not yet provided any information regarding the fate of the missing persons and that it was too soon to evaluate the progress made. He hoped that concrete progress would be made in the next round, and said that Kuwait continued to await information on the missing persons by the time of the Tripartite Commission's meeting at Geneva in April.

48. The ICRC spokesman noted to AFP that, in accordance with the Technical Subcommittee's working procedures, which provided for confidentiality of the discussions, ICRC would abstain from making statements. He was hopeful that the ongoing process would bring about practical solutions.

49. On 28 January, I conferred with the Coordinator, who briefed me on his visits to Amman, Cairo, Jeddah, Baghdad and Kuwait City. I emphasized the necessity for the parties to cooperate in good faith and to provide all the available information on the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. The Coordinator said that meetings of the Technical Subcommittee were proceeding in a good atmosphere, but that no substantive progress had been achieved so far.

50. On the same day, the Coordinator met with the Permanent Representative of Germany, Günter Pleuger, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of February.

51. On 29 January, the Coordinator met with the Permanent Representative of Iraq, and urged him to facilitate the submission of the cases to the Technical Subcommittee at its next meeting. He also conveyed my views on the need for Iraq to fully cooperate with the parties concerned on the humanitarian issue. Ambassador Aldouri expressed the hope that the next meeting in Amman would yield more positive results.

52. On 30 January, the Coordinator held consultations with officials of the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin, including Ambassador Wolfgang Trautwein, Special Coordinator for Iraq issues, and Hans Joachim Daerr, Director-General of the United Nations Department.

53. The third meeting of the Technical Subcommittee was held on 16 February. The Coordinator participated on the sidelines and had separate meetings with the Iraqi and Kuwaiti delegations. He was informed that the only progress made during the meeting was on the Iraqi cases submitted by Kuwait. As a result, Iraq agreed to consider one case closed and sought additional information on two other cases. Unfortunately, on the Kuwaiti cases, the Iraqi delegation stated that the information on the six files would be presented only at subsequent meetings. The Coordinator considered the delays were counterproductive and appealed for information to be provided at the earliest date.

54. After the talks, the head of the Kuwaiti delegation, Mr. Al-Shaheen, in an interview with KUNA, urged Iraq to be sincere and frank on this humanitarian issue. The head of the Iraqi delegation, Abdul Monim Al-Kadi, responded to this appeal, reiterating hope that the talks would not become politicized, and stated that Iraq had

provided precise documents on the fate of one of the Kuwaiti missing, and promised to hand over six others. The Iraqi delegation proposed to set up a commission to find the remains of the thousands of Iraqis in the border region of Metlaa.

55. The fourth meeting of the Technical Subcommittee was held on 2 March, the Coordinator meeting with both the Iraqi and Kuwaiti delegations on the sidelines. Despite the promise to move forward on the five cases of missing Kuwaitis, the Iraqi delegation did not present any new information and again promised to submit it at subsequent meetings. The Coordinator stated that the constructive approach to the disarmament issues, as exemplified by the destruction of al-Samoud missiles, should be matched by the same attitude on the humanitarian issues.

56. The fifth meeting of the Technical Subcommittee was held on 16 March. The head of the Iraqi delegation stated that the meeting was positive. Kuwait expressed its disappointment in the results. The Coordinator did not attend that meeting.

57. On 26 March, during the open meeting of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of Kuwait stated that Kuwait remained concerned about the fate of its prisoners and nationals of third countries who had been detained by Iraq since 1990. Ambassador Abulhasan called on the Security Council, ICRC and myself to demand that Iraq respect the principles of international humanitarian law and disclose the fate of Kuwait's prisoners as soon as possible (see S/PV. 4726).

58. On 3 April, the Permanent Representative of Kuwait addressed a letter to me in which he reiterated Kuwait's position on the issue of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. He appealed to all parties concerned not to politicize the issue, stressing that a humanitarian approach was required for its resolution. He also expressed his concern about the lack of progress on the question, owing to the Government of Iraq's failure to cooperate in full during the meetings of the Technical Subcommittee.

59. Ambassador Abulhasan also informed the Secretary-General in his letter that ICRC, under whose auspices the meetings of the Tripartite Commission and the Technical Subcommittee are held, had officially informed Kuwait in a letter dated 30 March of the postponement of the forty-second meeting of the Technical Subcommittee, originally scheduled for 30 and 31 March.

IV. Observations

60. Since my last report, there have been developments that provided some reason to hope that progress could be made on the issue of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains. Among those developments was the resumption of the meetings of the Technical Subcommittee. Since the beginning of the year, five meetings have been held but, regrettably, no concrete results have been achieved.

61. The meetings of the Technical Subcommittee were interrupted owing to the outbreak of conflict on 20 March 2003. It is hoped that the question of the repatriation or return of all Kuwaiti and third-country nationals or their remains will be resumed as soon as military activities cease, and that the mandate given to the High-level Coordinator will be implemented in full.